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St. Paul's Lutheran Church  
2100 16<sup>th</sup> Street SW  
Austin, MN 55912-1749

Pastor Ted Barthels  
Sermon preached on  
December 22, 2013  
4<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Advent

Scripture Lessons: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Luke 1:46-55  
Hymns: 55; 62; 76; 645:5 (78 for Gloria in Excelsis)

Grace be unto you and peace from God our Father and  
our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Sermon Text: Isaiah 2:2-5

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days  
That the mountain of the Lord's house  
Shall be established on the top of the mountains,  
And shall be exalted above the hills;  
And all nations shall flow to it.

3 Many people shall come and say,  
"Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths."

For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

4 He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people;  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,

Neither shall they learn war anymore.  
5 O house of Jacob, come and let us walk  
In the light of the Lord. (NKJV)

This is the Word of God!

Sanctify us, oh Lord, through Your truth. Your Word is truth. Amen.

In Christ, our coming Savior, dear fellow Redeemed.

INTRO: Humble beginnings:

One might argue that this is what Christmas is really all about. In a couple of days we will be listening to our children recite once again the Christmas story from Luke's gospel, reminding us of our Savior's birth in a stable in Bethlehem. We will think that surely there one sees such humble beginnings. But that isn't really the beginning of our Lord is it? We know the Lord came from above, from the throne of God, from the majesty on high! He came down to earth and became poor that He might exalt the lowly. And that is really what the Lord Jesus was all about, exalting that which was lowly and common. So we see in the prophet's words how --

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**THEME: The Glory of Mount Zion Is Established in Jesus' Advent**

Our text begins by telling us that –

**I. The Mountain of the Lord's House Is Exalted.**

Our text is a prophecy looking forward to the Jesus' coming, and especially His 1<sup>st</sup> advent when He came into

the world and took our human nature into His divine nature. The prophet starts with some picture language to help us realize the magnitude of this event. The mountain of the Lord's house was Mount Zion. It was upon this mountain that Jerusalem was located. While Zion provided a natural fortress for Jerusalem, it was not a grand mountain that could be observed from great distances. It was nestled in among other taller mountains. Indeed it is a small mountain compared to other grand mountains in the world. In fact, the Mount of Olives just across the Kidron Valley from Mount Zion provided an overview that many appreciated, including Jesus and His disciples as the disciples marveled at the splendid view of the temple. This lowly, little mountain is now exalted above all hills. It possesses a glory and majesty that attracts people from all over the world.

Zion didn't suddenly start growing as some volcanic mountains have so that it suddenly towered over the surrounding hills. That is not what the prophet foretold, it is not the Spirit's intent. Some might say this has certainly been fulfilled in a literal sense by all the people that flow to Jerusalem as tourists for spiritual pilgrimages for many different religions, but again, that is hardly what God is teaching us with these words. What brought this humble mountain glory was not the military prowess of David who made Jerusalem the nation's capital, or the magnificent architecture of Solomon, which all happened long before the prophet wrote, and which would be destroyed by Babylon as a judgment of the Lord.

What the prophet is foretelling is the glory that Jesus would bring to Jerusalem as He came to Jerusalem at the end of His public ministry. Jesus entered Jerusalem as King who came to deliver His people. He came to defeat

the enemy of His people by going boldly to the cross to redeem a fallen world to God. He won the victory by His sacrificial death and glorious resurrection. This is what exalted the mountain of the Lord's House, for all that the temple had signified found its fulfillment in Christ, in His death and resurrection.

Indeed, the Lord's house was revealed to be something far different from the physical building known as the temple. The Lord's temple was to be made up of living stones, of the people that Christ called to be His own people. These people would not come from just the people of the Jews, or the land of Judea and Galilee. They would come from all nations.

Even so we also came to that spiritual mountain which is the New Jerusalem, as part of the people of God. We are among those who have streamed toward Jerusalem through faith in Christ Jesus. This is the mountain of the house of God that has been exalted by the Lord Jesus as He established His Church. So this impacts us also as individual Christians.

## **II. He Brings Us Personal Wisdom and Transformation.**

**Isaiah 2:3** Many people shall come and say,  
“Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,  
To the house of the God of Jacob;  
He will teach us His ways,  
And we shall walk in His paths.”  
For out of Zion shall go forth the law,  
And the word of the Lord from Jerusalem.

Understanding that this is a **spiritual** mountain which had been established by the Lord, we are also brought to recognize that the wisdom that we need for eternal life is found in the Word of the Lord. By opening the Scriptures and reading of the Lord's coming for our salvation we find the way of grace and peace which the Lord has presented to us for life and salvation.

This truth has power to transform our hearts and our lives. As the Lord teaches us His ways it is not only the holy will of God's law that is revealed for us, but also His righteousness that comes to us in Christ. As we have been made new creatures by the Spirit working through the Word so then our desire will no longer be to live for ourselves, and for the fulfillment of the lusts of the flesh. The Spirit will lead us to walk in the ways of the Lord. We will walk in love and peace with both God and man.

As we walk in the way of the Lord we will **live to the glory** of the Lord. The Apostle Paul presented this power of the gospel to exalt the lowly in our epistle lesson. Yes, to the world it all appears as foolishness, but the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men (1 Corinthians 1). We realize that we are what we are by the grace of God and not by our own merit or excellence. So the apostle Paul concluded that **he who glories should glory in the Lord**. And that is exactly what the prophet also encouraged. As we sing the praises of Him who called us out of darkness, the Word of our God continues to go forth out of Zion, through our mouths, as our hearts rejoice in the glory of our Savior.

The impact that is ultimately made is astounding as --

### **III. He Transforms the World with His Judgment and Peace.**

**Isaiah 5:4** He shall judge between the nations,  
And rebuke many people;  
They shall beat their swords into plowshares,  
And their spears into pruning hooks;  
Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,  
Neither shall they learn war anymore.

The power and the authority of the Lord cannot be denied. Sadly, many in the world still reject the Lord. They ignore His words of warning. They defy His holy will. They spurn the gospel. They do what is right for them, what is right in their own eyes. They cling to their own works as righteousness.

We see the evil in the world flourish. We see the world going on as if there will be no accounting. However it is the Lord who has all power in heaven and on earth. Even as His Word has gone forth into the nations so also has His power and His authority. Those who defy the Lord do so at their own peril. He will come to judge the world, and convict the world of sin, and unbelief.

Down through the ages empires and powers of this world have come and gone. It is the Lord who has set their boundaries and the times of the nations. The Lord has brought judgment upon the wicked time and again. The Lord has brought justice for the oppressed, those who are spiritually oppressed. He has watched over His people. He has directed the course of human events for the advancement of His kingdom and His purpose. When the Lord enters land and nation He repurposes that nation. Oh, the political powers may believe that they are in

control, and, indeed, they have their political and social agendas in mind as they seek to secure their power, or produce a better world without suffering and disease and advancing prosperity and the acquisition of worldly wealth. They may seek to consolidate military power and expand their borders, but all remains under the Lord's control, and all serves His purpose as He directs and as He wills. The Lord's will is to bring peace to the nations, to bring peace to all mankind. And His will shall be done.

This peace will reach its final culmination only in the judgment at the last day. Then all that is in this world will be brought to nothing, and all that is bitter and sorrowful will be brought to an end. Only then war shall not be known, neither shall pain or sorrow, for the former things will have passed away.

But change is going on now. Even as the gospel continues to spread in the nations, so its power and influence is seen in men's hearts and lives, and in the nations who have been blessed with God's grace in Christ. We know this grace. We know the **transforming power of the Spirit** so that we are being led **not to conform to this world** but rather to be **transformed by the renewing of our minds** (Romans 12:2) so that we might come to know the full measure of God's grace and power. By that power of the gospel we have been **conformed to the image of His Son** (Romans 8:9). It is by this faith in our hearts that we join the prophet's call:

**Isaiah 2:5** "O house of Jacob, come and let us walk In the light of the Lord."

Even as by our faith we have become a part of the House of Jacob, so our heart's desire is that we should not walk

in the darkness of sin which brings death, but in the light of the Lord which shines as a bright light upon our path in life. So let us walk in the light of the Lord unto eternal life.

This week we will gather here in church and in our homes to celebrate our Savior's birth. Let us comprehend in our observances the glory of the Lord. May all we do as we worship, or as we gather with our families, or as we eat our Christmas dinners and exchange gifts, may it all be done to the praise and glory of our Savior Jesus Christ.

**AMEN.**

And the peace of God which passes all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Amen.